

# GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY BETWEEN 2002 AND 2003

People move for various reasons. For example, some seek better housing or have a new job; others may be entering a new phase of life, such as retirement. The U.S. Census Bureau studies patterns of relocation to find clues about future population distribution. Information in this chapter about geographical mobility among the civilian noninstitutionalized population comes from the 2003 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS ASEC).<sup>1</sup>

## Forty Million Movers

Forty million people in the United States moved between 2002 and 2003. Annual moving rates declined over the past decade, dropping from 17 percent of the population in 1994 to 14 percent in 2003.

Most moves between 2002 and 2003 were within the same county. Over the past 10 years, movers have become more likely to cross state lines. In 2003,

<sup>1</sup> The estimates in this report (which may be shown in text, figures, and tables) are based on responses from a sample of the population and may differ from actual values because of sampling variability or other factors. As a result, apparent differences between the estimates for two or more groups may not be statistically significant. All comparative statements have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted. For further information about the sources and accuracy of the estimates, see Appendix A.

## Words That Count

**Movers** are all people 1 and older who were living in a different residence than they were one year earlier at the time of the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey (CPS).

**Migration** is defined as moves that cross county boundaries. Movements into and out of the United States are called **international migration**.

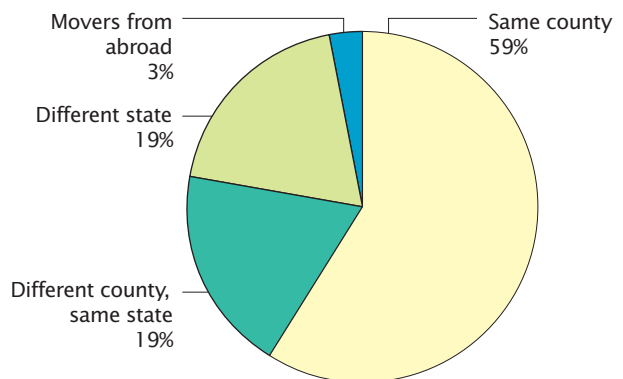
59 percent of all moves were within the same county, while 19 percent were to a different county within the same state, 19 percent were to a different state, and 3 percent were from abroad, as illustrated in Figure 1. In 1994, 62 percent of moves were within the same county, while 16 percent crossed state boundaries.

Housing tenure (whether a person owns or rents) was one of the strongest correlates of geographical mobility in 2003. Nearly 1 in 3 people living in renter-occupied housing moved between 2002 and 2003, compared with about 1 in 14 people living in owner-occupied housing.<sup>2</sup> Housing tenure is closely related to age, income, and race and Hispanic origin—factors that are also related to moving rates.

<sup>2</sup> As is the case with all characteristics in the ASEC, housing tenure was measured at the time of the survey (March 2003); tenure before the survey was not ascertained.

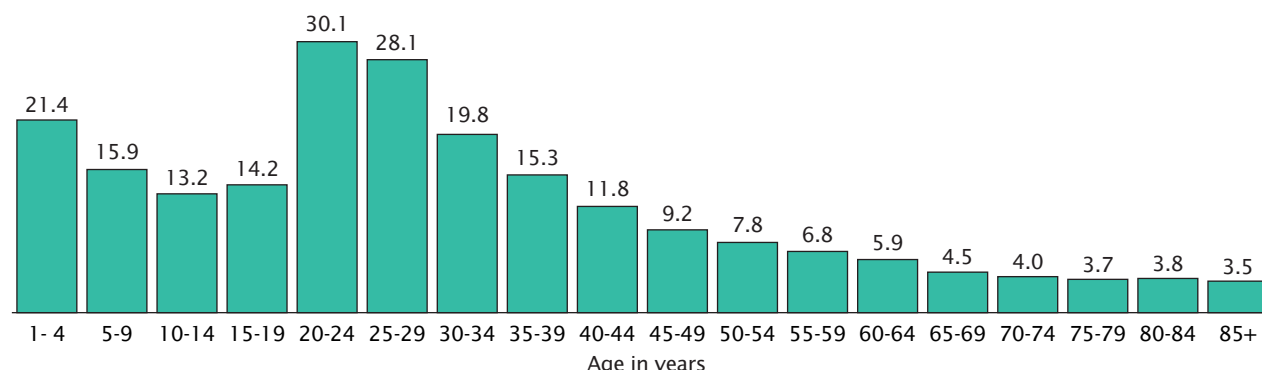
Figure 1.  
**Percent Distribution of Movers by  
Type of Move: 2002 to 2003**

(Population 1 year and older)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2003.

Figure 2.  
**Moving Rates by Age: 2002 to 2003**  
 (Percent moved for the population 1 year and older)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2003.

## Mobility by Age

Young adults have the highest moving rates. About one-third of 20- to 29-year-olds moved between 2002 and 2003, more than twice the moving rate of all people 1 and older, as shown in Figure 2. Mobility peaked among people in their twenties and then decreased with age. Movers 55 and older were more likely to have moved to a different state than younger people—28 percent of movers 55 to 64 crossed state lines, compared with 19 percent of those 25 to 29.

## Mobility by Income

Those with incomes below the poverty level were more likely to have moved (24 percent) than those with higher incomes (13 percent). The proportion of within-county moves was larger for people in poverty than higher-income people (61 percent and 58 percent, respectively), while people in poverty were less likely to have made an interstate move than others (17 percent and 20 percent, respectively).

## Mobility by Race and Hispanic Origin

Between 2002 and 2003, non-Hispanic Whites had the lowest overall moving rate, 12 percent. Hispanics and Blacks shared the highest overall moving rate of 18 percent. Asians followed closely with a 17-percent

moving rate.<sup>3</sup> Among people who moved, Blacks and Hispanics were most likely to have moved within the same county (about 65 percent each), while non-Hispanic Whites were the most likely to have crossed county or state lines (44 percent). Asians and Hispanics were more likely than Blacks or non-Hispanic Whites to have moved to the United States from abroad.

The picture changed when age, education, economic, household, nativity, residential, and tenure characteristics of the racial and ethnic groups were taken into account using multivariate analysis. When the data were analyzed this way, Blacks were 14 percent less likely to move than non-Hispanic Whites, and Hispanics and Asians were no longer different from non-Hispanic Whites.

## Reasons for Moving

The highest percentage of movers moved for housing-related reasons (51 percent), followed by family-related reasons (26 percent) and work-related reasons

<sup>3</sup> Hispanics may be any race. Based on the 2003 Current Population Survey (CPS) Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC), 4 percent of the single-race Black population and 2 percent of the single-race Asian population were also Hispanic. Data for the American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and Two or More Races populations are not shown in this chapter because of their small sample size in the ASEC.

(16 percent). More specifically, the leading reasons were to find a new or better house or apartment (20 percent), for “other family reasons” (13 percent), or to move into their own home (10 percent).

The proportion moving for family-related reasons was different for within-county moves and moves across county lines. Six percent of movers within a county cited a work-related reason for their move, compared with 28 percent of those who crossed county lines. Movers from abroad were the most likely to give a work-related reason for moving (38 percent).

In 2003, the overall moving rates for the population 18 and older differed by educational attainment—ranging from 11 percent of those with a high school education and no more to 13 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree. More highly educated people were more likely to move longer distances and more likely to cite a work-related reason for moving. While 23 percent of movers with a bachelor’s degree crossed a state line, 15 percent of those with less than a high school education did. Thirteen percent of people with

only a high school diploma moved for work-related reasons, compared with 23 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree and 25 percent of those with a master’s degree or higher.

### **The Census Bureau Can Tell You More**

For more information, consult the following U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Report: *Geographical Mobility: 2002 to 2003* (P20-549) by Jason Schachter.

Look for complete reports and detailed tables on the Census Bureau’s Web site <[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)>. Click on “G” and select “Geographic Mobility.”

Contact the Census Bureau’s Customer Service Center at 301-763-INFO (4636) or e-mail <[pop@census.gov](mailto:pop@census.gov)>.

For information on publications and other resources, see Appendix A.